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D/I-USAF CONTRIBUTION TO NIE-41: PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS

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IN THE KASHMIR DISPUTE TO THE END OF 1951.

USAF Declass/Release Instructions On File

III. A. Capabilities of the Indian Air Force.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has available approximately 177 combat type aircraft which are operational or could readily be made operational. These consist of 22 British type jet fighters, 128 British type conventional fighters and 27 light bombers (B-24's). In addition, the IAF possesses 57 twin-engine transports (C-47's). The IAF is commanded and guided by British RAF officers. Its over-all personnel strength consists of approximately 1108 officers, of which 410 are pilots, and 16,875 enlisted men. Because of the dependence on loaned RAF personnel, the operations of the IAF would be seriously impaired without continued British assistance.

The IAF has accepted delivery of 22 of the 39 Vampire jet fighters it has on order from the British but reportedly only 3 of these aircraft have as yet been assigned to a tactical fighter squadron. Currently the mainstay of the IAF is the British Tempest conventional fighter on which maintenance is good and serviceability over 60 per cent.

The present combat value and size of the IAF give it a relatively high combat capability in relation to the Royal Pakistan Air Force (RPAF). Defensively, the IAF has sufficient fighters to meet any aerial attack that could be launched by the RPAF. However, due to lack of adequate radar or visual early warning stations, poor communications, insufficient and widely dispersed anti-aircraft units, and the concentration of fighter aircraft on a few airfields, India is extremely vulnerable to a surprise attack. Offensively, the capabilities of the IAF are extremely limited at this time. Due to lack of qualified crews, maintenance inefficiency and lack of technical knowledge on the part of ground personnel, the B-24 light bombers could not

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be employed in offensive operations on a sustained basis. The fighter aircraft, however, could be used for limited tactical ground support, strafing and low level bombing missions.

Any offensive effort by the IAF might be limited by a lack of aviation fuel as all such fuel is imported. The shut-down of the Abadan Refinery has closed the normal source of supply for high-octane avgas. Reportedly the government is maintaining a six-months stored reserve of POL. Since no combat type aircraft are manufactured within India, the IAF is dependent on foreign sources for the procurement of such aircraft and also their essential spare parts.

Without substantial assistance from foreign sources it is believed that India is incapable of waging an offensive aerial war for a sustained period of operations. However, it is believed that the IAF is capable of providing limited support for localized operations of a short duration.

During World War II numerous airfields were constructed throughout India in every section of the country. Many of these facilities were constructed by the USAAF and later were declared surplus to American needs and turned over intact to the Indian Government. Approximately 300 were fields with permanent-type runways. Only from 10 to 15 per cent of these airfields have been maintained by the Indian Government and nothing has been added of permanent-type construction. Nearly all the air facilities existing in India could be made serviceable with a minimum amount of expense and effort. However, with the lack of maintenance effort on the part of the Indian Government, a greater number of these fields will become progressively more unserviceable.

India would neither be aided nor hindered to any appreciable extent by Afghan intervention in any conflict insofar as the role of the Afghan Air Force is

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concerned. The Afghan Air Force only has 25 aircraft in tactical units (13 attack fighters and 12 bomber-transport). The combat value of the Afghan Air Force is extremely low in all aspects of warfare; it is merely a token force with no appreciable offensive or defensive capabilities against the air forces of neighboring states.

III. C. What Intentions Are Indicated by Recent Indian Activities?

It is believed that recent Indian military moves do not indicate a desire to provoke war but do indicate a willingness to accept war and evidence that military pressure is being employed to attain political objectives.

During July the complement of an IAF fighter squadron was increased from 12 to 15 Tempests and the squadron was transferred from Palam Field, New Delhi to Halwara (approximately 60 miles west of Ambala in Punjab Province). Subsequently this squadron was returned to its New Delhi base due to inability to maintain it in the forward area. This squadron arrived at Halwara at approximately the same time the Government of India was concentrating troops in the Punjab area.

No other forward deployment of air units by the IAF or other moves have been reported to date which would indicate the imminence of hostilities insofar as the IAF was concerned. However, it is believed that the lack of other indications of probable combat air activity in the near future are not too significant in this situation since hostilities between Pakistan and India probably would consist primarily of infantry actions due to the inability of either country to sustain, without substantial outside assistance, large scale air operations.

A limiting factor on both air operations and the serviceability of airfields in the Kashmir area are the monsoon rains which are expected to end about the first of October. A period of good flying weather should then ensue.

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IV. A. Capabilities of the Royal Pakistan Air Force.

The Royal Pakistan Air Force (RPAF) has available approximately 92 combat type aircraft which are operational or could readily be made operational. These consist of 1 British type jet fighter, 84 British type conventional fighters and 7 British type light bombers (Halifax). In addition, the RPAF has approximately 24 twin-engined transports. The RPAF, like the IAF, is guided by British RAF officers. Its over-all personnel strength consists of approximately 531 officers, of which 124 are pilots, and 7204 enlisted men. In addition thereto, there are 6 pilot officers, 33 ground officers and 252 enlisted men of the RAF operating under contract as technical and administrative advisors to the RPAF. Because of the dependence on senior RAF officers, the RPAF, like the IAF, would be severely handicapped if it attempted to carry on operations without the assistance of the British.

The RPAF has received delivery of only one of the 36 Vickers "Attacker" jet aircraft it ordered from the British.* This jet fighter is not assigned to any tactical unit. The operational fighter squadrons of the RPAF are equipped with the postwar British Hawker "Fury" aircraft on which serviceability is very high.

Pakistan is almost entirely dependent on outside sources of supply for all aircraft, aircraft spares, munitions and armament, and aviation fuel. Unless Pakistan has stockpiled avgas, the shut-down of the Abadan Refinery has closed completely the normal source of supply for high-octane avgas. Although there is no

* Reports have been received stating that six of these Vickers "Attacker" jet aircraft have been received by the RPAF from the UK; however, receipt of only one "Attacker" has been confirmed.

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aircraft factory in Pakistan, there is one facility capable of assembly, repair and modification of airframes and engines. Supply organization and administration appears to be reasonably efficient, and maintenance of aircraft in tactical units is good.

The combat value of the RPAF is relatively low in comparison with that of the IAF. In initial operations the RPAF might be fairly effective in a conflict with India but its combat value would decrease rapidly in actual combat because of its lack of reserves and the comparatively greater size of the IAF. Both Pakistan and India are in the process of developing jet fighter forces, but, to date, the IAF has received by far the larger number and has had a greater opportunity for operational training.

Defensively, the RPAF probably could, at the outset of hostilities, meet any aerial attack that could be launched by the IAF at least until such time as the IAF is able to utilize in combat operations additional numbers of the jet fighters which already have been delivered by the British. However, the defensive capabilities of the RPAF, for the reasons mentioned above, would fade after a short period. Offensively, the capabilities of the RPAF are extremely limited. The RPAF could provide limited tactical ground support and conduct strafing and low level bombing missions for a short period. In addition, the RPAF has 7 light bombers (Halifax) which conceivably could be used for sporadic strikes, although currently there is no organized light bomber squadron and these aircraft are not assigned to any tactical unit.

For the reasons stated in paragraph III A above, Pakistan, as India, would neither be aided nor hindered to any appreciable extent by Afghan intervention in any conflict insofar as the role of the Afghan Air Force is concerned since the combat capabilities of that force are negligible.

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IV. C. What are the Indications from the Pakistan Response to India's Activities?

It is believed that Pakistan does not desire to provoke a war, but is willing to accept war or to pursue political objectives through military pressure.

Reportedly the Pakistan Army during July ordered units to defensive positions in the direction of Lahore (to the northwest of the area reported as the site of Indian troop movements). No movement of RPAF units has been reported, however, all leaves in the Pakistan Armed Forces reportedly were cancelled. It is believed that currently the RPAF is as ready for combat as its limited equipment and size will permit. Reports indicate that probably the RAF advisors will withdraw from the respective air forces in the event of hostilities between India and Pakistan with a consequent decrease in the combat effectiveness of both forces.

VI. What Are The Probable Developments In The Near Future?

(No contribution has been made to this section which has been allotted to "OIR and Defense" since the questions posed involve political considerations primarily).

VII. What Effect Could These Probable Developments Have On U.S. Security Interests?

From the standpoint of aerial warfare, Pakistan is strategically important because of its geographical position which affords potential sites for air bases which could be used for bomber strikes against any part of the USSR. In the event that India ultimately acquired all or a portion of Pakistan, the areas so acquired would probably be denied to the U.S. and her allies as sites for air bases in view of the Indian Government's apparent determination to maintain an independent position in the East-West conflict and to avoid a commitment to the West. The security interests of the U.S. thereby would be prejudiced to this extent if the occupant of this strategic area becomes India instead of Pakistan which, as a more firmly aligned member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, currently is more favorably oriented toward the West.

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